

CHAPTER 3: INSPIRATION AND PROPHECY □ PARAGRAPH 1

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

We'll now begin a discussion of the greatest means humans have of making contact with the Divine -- prophecy. And while those who practice theurgy can attain some degree of it, as we said, becoming an out-and-out prophet took quite a lot more.

(We purposefully said "took" rather than "takes" because prophecy is nearly gone for now, and won't return in full until the Messiah appears. There are still degrees of it, though, even in our day and age; and in fact some rare individuals experience a rather high degree of "near-prophecy" as we'd call it. But full prophecy isn't available -- at this point.)

It's vitally important to know that the belief in prophecy -- and thus in the notion that G-d does indeed communicate with humanity -- is "one of the bases of the faith", as Maimonides puts it (Yesodei HaTorah 7:1). After all, were it not for prophecy we'd have neither Torah nor Tradition, or any indication from G-d as to how to draw close to Him.

So we'll touch upon higher Divine inspiration and full prophecy in broad, theoretical terms in this chapter, and focus upon the experience itself in the next one.

The first point to be made is that prophecy isn't simply an offshoot of reason and logic, or even a sort of super-reason. For while G-d did indeed grant us the ability to study things for ourselves, understand them, and to use that knowledge to advance, there's nonetheless a higher form of knowledge available which Ramchal refers to as "bestowed" knowledge.

This gift allows one to garner certain higher-rank bits of information -- along with an understanding of everything associated with them and their place in the grand scheme of things. We're also told that whoever is granted this information is also certain of its accuracy.

This series is dedicated to the memory of Yitzchak Hehrsh ben Daniel, and Sarah Rivka bas Yaakov Dovid.

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